

THE PARENTAL VIEWPOINT CONCERNING THE VALUES OF  
INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC COMPETITION IN THE  
JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL IN POCAHONTAS COUNTY, IOWA

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by  
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The development of the junior high school as separate from the high school and the elementary school resulted from two things. The first was the rapid growth in high school attendance and the second was the realization by educators that many pupils leaving the elementary schools would not finish high school.

With the development of junior high schools, a curriculum based on that of high schools was adopted. This curriculum included the athletic programs, first in intramural form and later in interscholastic competition.

Much has been written concerning the benefits and failures of these athletic programs. Some parents, educators and others concerned have made efforts to discourage them. Others back them strongly.

Despite the controversy surrounding it, there is evidence to show that interscholastic athletics in the junior high schools is increasing. Mitchell says:

There is no need to present the case for interscholastic athletics in the junior high school. It is a flourishing movement. It is a going concern, an athletic must, even without educational blessing. It is a bandwagon of the day with seemingly no end to the new followers hastening to climb aboard. Protesting to no avail are the medical men, mental hygienists, psychologists, sociologists, and certain worried educators and

parents who feel that the trend is wrong. Even their group resolutions go unheeded.<sup>1</sup>

#### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It is the problem of the administrator to make the athletic program in the junior high school as effective as possible for those students involved in it. To do this, he must periodically evaluate the program.

To determine how effective the program is, the administrator must have a means of studying a cross section of the students involved and their reactions to the program. It seems logical to survey the parents of the students involved to gain an insight into the benefits and detriments of the athletic program.

A good relationship between the parents and all phases of their child's school life makes a difference in the performance of the child. The athletic program can benefit the student most when he is comfortable in his participation in it. The author feels that parental opinion has an effect on this.

A survey of the parents could provide the administrator with answers in the following three areas: (1) To what extent

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<sup>1</sup>Elmer D. Mitchell, "Junior High School Athletics," Educational Bulletin, Monthly Bulletin of the Department of Public Instruction, Vol. XXIV, No. 7 (Des Moines, Iowa: State Department of Public Instruction, March, 1953), pp. 5-6.

do parents feel that interscholastic athletics in junior high school are beneficial to the students involved? (2) What drawbacks do parents find that interscholastic athletic participation in the junior high school present? (3) To what extent do opinions differ concerning the role of the male and the female student in athletic competition?

Knowledge of the ideas and opinions obtained may serve to assist the directors of these programs to continuously strive to make the programs more effective for the students.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There have been many studies made and many opinions written concerning the values of various interscholastic athletics in the junior high school. The conclusions reached vary, and the bases for the conclusions conflict in many cases.

Those who do not feel that there should be interscholastic athletic activities at the junior high level generally are opposed because they feel that students at this age are not physically or psychologically ready to participate. Some of the comments are as follows:

From the point of view of health it is important to remember that children of this age are in a period of rapid change in size and in emotional and social adjustment. There is at this age only partial ossification of bones, with a healing hazard after injury that cannot be disregarded.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Talor Dodson, "Elementary School Athletics," School Activities, XXIII (October, 1951), 59-60.



Strenuous athletics during the period of adolescence is a subject of concern for health educators and members of the medical profession who have observed the damaging effect of improperly supervised programs of physical education for this age group. The adolescent period is the time of most rapid growth, the half-way period between immaturity and maturity, during which the stresses and strains, both physical and emotional, of activities injudiciously imposed and undertaken may affect the lifelong health of the individual child, and in aggregate, the health of the nation.<sup>1</sup>

Since adolescence is one of the most critical periods in a child's life, his health should be guarded very carefully by the school. The normal, older boy may engage in tremendous physical activity without harm, but the type and amount of activity of the adolescent child should definitely be limited.<sup>2</sup>

In 1951, the American Association of School Administrators stated:

Interscholastic athletics are not recommended for junior high school boys. At these levels most boys are prepubescent, growing rapidly, and insufficiently developed to withstand the physical and emotional strain of interscholastic competition.<sup>3</sup>

In 1952, the Joint Committee on Athletic Competition for Children of Elementary and Junior High School Age recommended:

No interschool competition of a varsity pattern. Interschool competition of a varsity pattern and similarly organized competition under auspices of

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<sup>1</sup>C. L. Lowman, "The Vulnerable Age," Journal of Health and Physical Education, XVIII (November, 1947), 635.

<sup>2</sup>Foster Keagle, "Athletic Standards Needed to Protect Health of Adolescents," School Management, XVII (November, 1947), 13.

<sup>3</sup>American Association of School Administrators, Health in Schools, XX (Washington, D.C.: American Association of School Administrators, 1951), 197.

other community agencies are definitely disapproved for children below the ninth grade.<sup>1</sup>

In 1954, the Educational Policies Commission recommended:

No junior high school should have a "school team" that competes with school teams of other junior high schools in organized leagues or tournaments. Varsity-type interscholastics for junior high school boys and girls should not be permitted.<sup>2</sup>

In a summary taken from a survey by Tomkins and Roe it is stated:

Reasons cited in opposition were that interscholastics tend to overexcite and overstrain physically and emotionally immature youngsters, that they require too much time and effort, that they are too expensive while involving only a few participants, that they are less effective than intramural programs, and that they place too great an emphasis on winning and are, therefore, too competitive.<sup>3</sup>

Those who do not favor interscholastic sports activities generally recommend an organized intramural program for children in the junior high school. In 1963 the Division for

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<sup>1</sup>Joint Committee on Athletic Competition for Elementary and Junior High School Age Children, Desirable Athletic Competition for Children (Washington, D.C.: American Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation, 1952), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Educational Policies Commission, School Athletics (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1954), p. 36.

<sup>3</sup>Ellsworth Tomkins and Virginia Roe, "A Survey of Interscholastic Athletic Programs in Separately Organized Junior High Schools," The Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, XLII (November, 1958), 31.

Girls and Women's Sports advised of the desirability of the integration of the intramural and the physical education programs.<sup>1</sup>

Mitchell states:

Psychologically, the boy of eleven to fifteen is not yet ready to assume the emotional stress of championship competition. This process must be gradually undergone. . . . He needs to serve an apprenticeship in order to make a normal adjustment to the more serious responsibilities that are to come. In intramural competition there is little publicity in case a player makes a mistake. Consequently, it is better mental hygiene for the participants to play their beginning games in situations where they can develop skills and team play without being subjected to undue nervous strain with resulting emotional impairment.<sup>2</sup>

Dexter wrote, concerning the value of sports for the adolescent that skills should be taught through rhythms, free but directed play, and exploration. He felt that through this method each child could experience success.<sup>3</sup>

Bucher and Dupree conclude:

The instructional program in skills should be accompanied by an intramural program in all the activities included in the instructional program. The intramural program represents a laboratory experience in which

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<sup>1</sup>Division for Girls and Women's Sports, "Statement of Policies for Competition in Girls and Women's Sports," Journal of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, XXXIV (September, 1963), 32.

<sup>2</sup>Elmer D. Mitchell, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>3</sup>Genevieve Dexter, "Values in Sports at the Elementary School Level," Values in Sports (Washington, D.C.: American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation) p. 7.

the participant may compete for the sake of playing without undue emphasis on winning.<sup>1</sup>

But yet interscholastic athletics seem to be well established at the junior high level. Many administrators favor them, and in general, there is an increase in them.

Citing the values of interscholastic athletics at the junior high level, Tomkins and Roe, in their survey, state:

Those who approved interscholastic athletics felt that such activities are responsible for developing school spirit, that they provided wholesome competition, that they taught the values of sportsmanship and cooperation, that they emphasized desirable social standards of behavior, and that they served as an outlet for the release of the abundant energy of adolescence.<sup>2</sup>

Rowe states that interschool athletics would be good if certain criteria could be met. He explains:

. . .if boys could compete with one another without the pressure put upon them to win for the school, without the nervous excitement imposed on them by playing before an audience, and without the setting up of an artificial situation, the competitions would be good.<sup>3</sup>

In an article by Hale, a study reported that more than 85 per cent of the orthopedists polled expressed the opinion that athletic competition did not present a special

<sup>1</sup>Charles A. Bucker and Ralph K. Dupee, Jr., "Athletic Standards," Athletics in Schools and Colleges (New York, 1965), p. 85.

<sup>2</sup>Tomkins and Roe, Op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>3</sup>Floyd A. Rowe, "Should the Junior High Schools Have Highly Organized Competitive Athletics?", School Activities, XXII (November-December, 1950), 130.

hazard to youths 12-15 years old. He states:

The present evidence indicates that pre-high school age children are not harmed but rather benefit considerable from interscholastic athletic experience.<sup>1</sup>

Many studies were done with the opinion seemingly directed more toward the athletic competition for boys. The trend today toward more participation for girls brings new ideas for study.

Montoye and Cunningham indicate that girls performance in sports skills is limited in improvement in the following statement:

It is clear that physical size and performance in sports and other physical tasks increase together in the growing child. This is true in both sexes even when the influence of age is eliminated. However girls' performance in most sports skills improves only until about the age of 13 or 14, whereas boys continue to show<sup>2</sup> improvement throughout high school and even longer.

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<sup>1</sup>Creighton J. Hale, "Athletics for Pre-High School Age Children," Journal of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation, XXX (December, 1959), 19-21.

<sup>2</sup>Henry J. Montoye and David A. Cunningham, "Physical Education," Encyclopedia of Educational Research (New York: Macmillin, 1969), p. 970.

## CHAPTER II

### STUDY OF PARENTAL OPINIONS CONCERNING THE VALUE OF INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS IN THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

#### PROCEDURES FOLLOWED IN OBTAINING DATA

The data upon which this study is based were obtained, for the most part, by means of an opinionnaire which was sent to parents of students involved in junior high interscholastic athletics in Pocahontas County. Information from the opinionnaire concerned effects on the scholastic, physical and emotional performance of those students involved in junior high athletics, and with parental attitudes concerning the worth of the athletic program.

The lists of names of the parents of the students involved in interscholastic athletics in junior high were obtained from the junior high principals of the schools in Pocahontas County. From these lists, 200 names were selected for use in the study, 100 names of girls' parents and 100 names of boys' parents. The number from each school was based in direct proportion of the population of that school district to that of the whole county.

Of the 200 opinionnaires mailed, 112, or 56 per cent, were returned. Of the 112, fifty-seven were returned from parents of boys and fifty-five from girls' parents. Eleven of these were incompletely answered and were discarded,

leaving fifty girls' and fifty-one boys' forms completed. One opinionnaire from the boys' group was then randomly picked and discarded, thus leaving an equal number of each group for study.

### EFFECTS ON THE SCHOLASTIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS IN JUNIOR HIGH ATHLETICS

Table 1 shows that the greatest share (73 percent) of students participating in junior high athletics showed no change in their grades as a result of participation in athletics.

TABLE 1

PARENTAL OPINION CONCERNING THE EFFECT OF JUNIOR HIGH  
INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC COMPETITION ON GRADES OF  
PARTICIPATING STUDENTS IN POCAHONTAS COUNTY

	Great Lowering	Some Lowering	No Change	Some Improvement	Great Improvement
Boys	0	2	38	9	1
Girls	0	5	35	10	0
Total	0%	7%	73%	19%	1%

There was some lowering of grades in only 7 percent of those participating and some improvement of grades in 19 percent of the cases studied. One child showed much improvement in grades.

Table 2 shows that the study habits of those students involved in interscholastic athletics are almost equally unaffected. There was no change in study time allotted for 70 percent of the students. Of the girls, ten girls, or 20 percent of the girls, decreased study time, compared with four boys, or 8 percent of the boys, decreasing study time. Increased time was allotted by 16 percent of the students, equal in number for boys and girls.

TABLE 2

PARENTAL OPINION CONCERNING THE EFFECT OF JUNIOR HIGH  
 INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC COMPETITION ON THE STUDY  
 TIME ALLOTTED BY PARTICIPATING STUDENTS IN  
 POCAHONTAS COUNTY

	Decreased 26-50%	Decreased 5-25%	No Change	Increased 5-25%	Increased 26-50%
Boys	0	4	38	8	0
Girls	0	10	32	8	0
Total	0%	14%	70%	16%	0%

The ratio of study time and grade effect proved interesting. For boys, those with decreased study time (4) resulted in one lowering of grades, one improvement of grades and two with no change in grades. Those boys who increased study time (8) resulted in five with improved grades and three with grades unchanged. The remaining boys who did not change study habits (38) showed no change in grades for



thirty-three, some lowering of grades for one, some improvement for three and great improvement for one boy.

The girls who decreased study time (10) showed four with a lowering of grades and six with unchanged grades. Those girls who spent more time studying (8) showed three had higher grades and five had unchanged grades. Unchanged study time (32) resulted in unchanged grades for twenty-four girls, improved grades for seven and lowered grades for one girl.

One parent pointed out that the time spent studying was the same for her child, but the child was using study periods to study instead of after school.

#### OTHER OPINIONS DIRECTLY CONCERNING CHILDREN OF THOSE PARENTS INTERVIEWED IN POCAHONTAS COUNTY

The effect of interscholastic athletic competition on the personality of those children involved seems to show a tendency toward more outgoing personalities, as seen in Table 3. The personalities of the boys showed 42 percent unchanged, 48 percent more outgoing and 10 percent much more outgoing. Parents of the girls indicated 4 percent less outgoing, 30 percent unchanged, 56 percent more outgoing and 10 percent much more outgoing.

TABLE 3

PARENTAL OPINION CONCERNING THE EFFECT OF JUNIOR HIGH  
 INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC COMPETITION ON THE  
 PERSONALITY OF THE CHILD PARTICIPATING IN  
 POCAHONTAS COUNTY

	Much less Outgoing	Less Outgoing	No Change	More Outgoing	Much more Outgoing
Boys	0	0	21	24	5
Girls	0	2	15	28	5
Total	0%	2%	36%	52%	10%

A parent of a boy of "spindly size" states athletics has "made a marked improvement in his personality, interest and his grades." Another stated "My son was an extremely shy boy. I think the athletics program has helped develop his character, too."

The excitability of the students before a game is shown in Table 4. It shows that 8 percent of the boys are perceived to be totally calm before a game, 22 percent are seen as slightly excited, 26 percent are considered somewhat excited, 38 percent are considered quite excited and 6 percent of the boys are seen as greatly excited. No girls were found to be totally calm the day of the game, while 18 percent of them were seen as slightly excited, 44 percent were considered somewhat excited, 30 percent were considered quite excited and 8 percent were seen as greatly excited.

TABLE 4

PARENTAL OPINION CONCERNING THE EMOTIONAL STATUS OF THE  
STUDENT BEFORE A JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL INTERSCHOLASTIC  
ATHLETIC CONTEST IN POCAHONTAS COUNTY

	Totally Calm	Slightly Excited	Somewhat Excited	Quite Excited	Greatly Excited
Boys	4	11	13	19	3
Girls	0	9	22	15	4
Total	4%	20%	35%	34%	7%

Excitability at this age group apparently does not differ greatly between boys and girls, although girls may tend to be more open in their expressions of it, since 8 percent of the boys were seen as "totally calm".

Do parents feel that their child is given a fair chance to participate according to his abilities in junior high athletics? Table 5 shows that 4 percent of the boys' parents indicated that their child definitely wasn't given a chance, 6 percent somewhat disagreed that the chance was given, 4 percent were uncertain, 30 percent somewhat agreed and 56 percent indicated that their child had been allotted a fair chance to participate in athletics.

The girls' parents were less satisfied, however, with 4 percent strongly disagreeing, 16 percent somewhat disagreeing and 12 percent uncertain. Twenty-eight percent somewhat agreed that their child was given a fair chance and 40 percent strongly agreed with this idea.

TABLE 5

PARENTAL OPINION CONCERNING WHETHER THEIR CHILD IS GIVEN A  
FAIR CHANCE TO PARTICIPATE ACCORDING TO HIS ABILITIES IN  
JUNIOR HIGH INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS IN  
POCAHONTAS COUNTY

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Boys	2	3	2	15	28
Girls	2	8	6	14	20
Total	4%	11%	8%	29%	48%

It was noted that the larger the school population, the more children involved and thus more parents in these schools expressed dissatisfaction with a "fair chance" being given.

How do parents feel about their child's participation in interscholastic athletics? Table 6 shows most parents (67 percent) strongly in favor of their child's participation. Only 3 percent of the parents disagreed with their children's participation and 3 percent were uncertain, while 27 percent somewhat favored their child being in athletics. The boys' parents favored participation in 96 percent of the cases, and girls' parents did in 92 percent of the cases. Interestingly, no boys' parent was uncertain of his stand.

TABLE 6

PARENTAL ATTITUDE TOWARD CHILD'S PARTICIPATION IN JUNIOR  
HIGH INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS IN POCAHONTAS COUNTY

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Boys	0	2	0	11	37
Girls	0	1	3	16	30
Total	0%	3%	3%	27%	67%

Table 7 shows the total effect of participation in junior high athletics on their child to be beneficial, as indicated by the parents surveyed in Pocahontas County.

TABLE 7

PARENTAL OPINION CONCERNING THE TOTAL EFFECT OF  
PARTICIPATION IN JUNIOR HIGH INTERSCHOLASTIC  
ATHLETICS ON THEIR CHILD IN POCAHONTAS COUNTY

	Very Harmful	Somewhat Harmful	Neither Harmful nor Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Very Beneficial
Boys	0	0	6	22	22
Girls	0	1	10	28	11
Total	0%	1%	16%	50%	33%

Fifty percent indicated that they were somewhat beneficial and 33 percent indicated that they were very beneficial, while 16 percent indicated that they were neither harmful nor

beneficial and 1 percent indicated that they were somewhat harmful. The basis for that 1 percent seemed to be that the girl's personality had become less outgoing and competition to "make the team" had been bad for her, according to her parent. The number of parents of boys who indicated that athletics was very beneficial to their child was double that of the girls' parents (22:11), while girls' parents finding no benefits or detriments to their child outnumbered boys' parents 10 to 6.

A parent commented that "Enthusiasm for sports keeps my boys mentally and physically occupied year around."

OPINIONS CONCERNING JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC COMPETITION  
NOT DIRECTLY CONCERNING THE CHILDREN OF THOSE  
PARENTS INTERVIEWED

According to 68 percent of the parents, participation in athletics in junior high school is seen as beneficial healthwise to the child, as shown in Table 8. Twenty-eight percent of the boys' parents found it very beneficial, and 16 percent of the girls' parents found it very beneficial. Ten percent of the parents were uncertain of an answer, with the ratio of girls' parents to boys' parents 4:1. No parents claimed that participation was detrimental to health at this age. Several parents added comments concerning the benefits of the exercise gained by their child.

TABLE 8

PARENTAL OPINION CONCERNING THE EFFECT OF INTERSCHOLASTIC  
ATHLETICS ON THE HEALTH OF JUNIOR HIGH AGE CHILDREN IN  
POCAHONTAS COUNTY

	Very Detrimental	Detrimental	Uncertain	Beneficial	Very Beneficial
Boys	0	0	2	34	14
Girls	0	0	8	34	8
Total	0%	0%	10%	68%	22%

The psychological effect on the child to "make the team" shows one-fourth of the parents uncertain of an answer, as shown in Table 9. Fifty-five percent of the parents indicated it to be beneficial and 6 percent very beneficial. One parent added that it is good "because life is competitive." Fourteen percent indicated it was somewhat detrimental. Nine percent of the girls' parents indicated it was detrimental, while 5 percent of the boys' parents indicated it was detrimental. One parent who claimed uncertainty stated that the effect certainly depended on whether or not the child ultimately "makes the team."

TABLE 9

PARENTAL OPINION CONCERNING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT ON THE  
JUNIOR HIGH AGE CHILD TO "MAKE THE TEAM" IN  
POCAHONTAS COUNTY

	Very Detrimental	Detrimental	Uncertain	Beneficial	Very Beneficial
Boys	0	5	13	28	4
Girls	0	9	12	27	2
Total	0%	14%	25%	55%	6%

The widest range of opinions were registered when the parents were asked to comment on the statement "Too much emphasis is put on winning in junior high athletics." (See Table 10.) Ten percent strongly disagreed with the statement, 25 percent somewhat disagreed, 16 percent were uncertain, 31 percent somewhat agreed and 18 percent strongly agreed.

TABLE 10

PARENTAL OPINION CONCERNING THE IDEA THAT TOO MUCH EMPHASIS  
IS PUT ON WINNING IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL INTERSCHOLASTIC  
ATHLETICS IN POCAHONTAS COUNTY

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Boys	7	9	11	14	9
Girls	3	16	5	17	9
Total	10%	25%	16%	31%	18%



Some of those protesting the above idea added the comment that sportsmanship and exercise and fun were to be valued more highly than winning in athletics.

One parent stated that "I really don't believe that too much emphasis is put on winning but I do believe too much emphasis is put on winning by a large score."

When asked if all who are involved in junior high athletics then should be allowed to actively participate, the opinion was highly in favor of such participation. (See Table 11.) Sixty-seven percent indicated strong feelings about this and 29 percent somewhat agreed. Only 2 percent were uncertain and 2 percent somewhat disagreed.

TABLE 11

PARENTAL OPINION CONCERNING ALLOWING ACTIVE PARTICIPATION  
OF ALL STUDENTS INVOLVED IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL  
INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS IN POCAHONTAS COUNTY

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Boys	0	0	1	14	35
Girls	0	2	1	15	32
Total	0%	2%	2%	29%	67%

As one father put it, "Many a young lad with not too much ability has given 100%+ effort at practice, but putting the spotlight on being #1 deprives this young fellow the chance to play very much."

The chance of injury in junior high athletics found 10 percent of the parents concerned that there was either considerable or great chance of being injured while participating, as shown in Table 12. The 2 percent who indicated there was great chance of injury were parents of girls. The totals were fairly evenly divided on the other choices, with 8 percent indicating considerable chance, 61 percent some chance, 20 percent little chance and 9 percent very little chance. One parent commented "There's great chance of injury in walking to the school bus also--."

TABLE 12

PARENTAL OPINION CONCERNING THE CHANCE OF INJURY TO THOSE  
STUDENTS INVOLVED IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL INTERSCHOLASTIC  
ATHLETICS IN POCAHONTAS COUNTY

	Great Chance	Considerable Chance	Some Chance	Little Chance	Very Little Chance
Boys	0	4	32	9	5
Girls	2	4	29	11	4
Total	2%	8%	61%	20%	9%

Parents in 84 percent of the cases expressed the feeling that athletic competition between schools at the junior high level was beneficial. (See Table 13.) Only 3 percent thought it was detrimental and 13 percent were uncertain. Twice as many boys' parents as girls' parents (12-6) found it highly beneficial.

TABLE 13

PARENTAL OPINION CONCERNING ATHLETIC COMPETITION BETWEEN  
SCHOOLS AT THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL IN POCAHONTAS  
COUNTY

	Very Detrimental	Detrimental	Neither Detrimental nor Beneficial	Beneficial	Very Beneficial
Boys	0	1	6	31	12
Girls	0	2	7	35	6
Total	0%	3%	13%	66%	18%

When asked about the desirability of girls participating in junior high athletics as opposed to boys participating, the parents indicated that girls should be allowed participation, as seen in Table 14. Fifty-six percent of the girls' parents and fifty-four percent of the boys' parents expressed feelings that it is definitely as desirable for girls as for boys to participate. Thirty-four percent of the girls' parents indicated it was probably as desirable, 2 percent were uncertain, 6 percent indicated it perhaps was not as desirable and 2 percent indicated it definitely was not. The boys' parents indicated 2 percent definitely not, 12 percent perhaps not and 6 percent uncertain with 26 percent who indicated it was probably as desirable.

TABLE 14

PARENTAL OPINION CONCERNING THE DESIRABILITY OF GIRLS  
PARTICIPATING IN ATHLETICS AS OPPOSED TO BOYS  
PARTICIPATING IN POCAHONTAS COUNTY

	Definitely Not as Desirable	Perhaps Not as Desirable	Uncertain	Probably as Desirable	Definitely as Desirable
Boys	1	6	3	13	27
Girls	1	3	1	17	28
Total	2%	9%	4%	30%	55%

Finally, when asked if they felt participation in junior high interscholastic athletics was necessary as a prelude to high school athletic participation, a full 91 percent indicated it was necessary. (See Table 15.) Fifty-five percent indicated it was definitely necessary, 36 percent probably necessary, 3 percent were uncertain, 5 percent probably not necessary and 1 percent definitely not necessary.

TABLE 15

PARENTAL OPINION CONCERNING THE NECESSITY OF JUNIOR HIGH  
SCHOOL ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION AS A PRELUDE TO HIGH  
SCHOOL ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION IN POCAHONTAS COUNTY

	Definitely Not Necessary	Probably Not Necessary	Uncertain	Probably Necessary	Definitely Necessary
Boys	0	4	1	18	27
Girls	1	1	2	18	28
Total	1%	5%	3%	36%	55%

Those parents who commented seemed enthusiastic about the opportunity to express their ideas about this activity of their child's.

## CHAPTER III

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It was the purpose of this study to determine the values and detriments of interscholastic athletics at a junior high level as viewed by the parents of the students who participate. It also was hoped to determine if there was a significant difference in the findings of girls' parents and boys' parents.

The general effect of athletic participation in the junior high school on the grades of those participating was no change, with a slight leaning toward improvement.

The study time allotted by those students participating also seems largely unchanged, with some tendency toward better use of time.

Participation in interscholastic athletics seems to cause the student to become more outgoing in personality.

The excitability of the child generally seems to range from slightly excited to quite excited before a game. Girls apparently showed their feelings of excitement more openly than did boys.

The greatest share of parents seem satisfied that their child is given a fair chance to participate according to his abilities. The larger populated school districts seem to have more dissatisfaction, with this due to the large number of children available to participate.

Most parents seem to favor their child's participation in junior high interscholastic athletics. Generally, the child's desire is also that of the parents.

Most parents expressed the feeling that athletic participation was beneficial to their child. Boys' parents were more enthusiastic than were girls' parents.

Nearly all parents seem convinced that athletic competition is beneficial healthwise to the junior high student. Of those who are uncertain, the greater share were girls' parents.

Most parents expressed the feeling that the challenge to "make the team" is psychologically beneficial to the student in junior high school. There is a fair share who aren't convinced of this, however. Girls' parents seem less convinced than boys' parents.

Almost all parents stated that too much emphasis is put on winning in junior high school athletics. They would like to see more emphasis on sportsmanship, exercise and fun. Girls' parents do not differ significantly from boys' parents on this matter.

A great share of the parents want to see active participation of all students who are involved in junior high athletics. This would tie in with the previous idea.

Many parents stated that there is some chance of injury in participation in junior high athletics, although few indicated this chance is great. Schools offering junior

high football showed more responses leaning toward greater chance of injury.

Parents generally seem to favor athletic competition between schools at the junior high level.

Most parents definitely expressed feelings that interscholastic athletics are as desirable for girls as for boys. The parents of boys were less certain of this than those of girls.

Most parents agree that participation at the junior high athletic level is necessary as a prelude to high school participation. There is little difference between boys' and girls' parents' responses on this matter.

As a result of this study, the author has found parental opinion to be generally in favor of the continuation of junior high school interscholastic athletics.

Having participated in junior high athletics and later having coached them for nine years, the author feels that the detriments found by various authors have not been sufficiently proven to either cut down or eliminate this program.

Therefore, based on the conclusions of this study, and in spite of the literature found opposing junior high interscholastic athletics, the following recommendations are suggested by this author:

1. More students must be given a chance to actively participate in junior high interscholastic athletics.
2. Because of the scholastic and personality and



physical benefits seen, interest in junior high interscholastic athletics should be widely encouraged.

3. Athletics in junior high for both boys and girls should definitely be continued, as they seem to unite these students through a common interest and goal.

4. If it is possible, less emphasis should be put on winning in junior high interscholastic athletics. The author feels that this would be very difficult, however, because both the parents and the students like the idea of winning. Junior high athletics has definitely become a spectator sport. Winning evokes an attitude which is favorable within the school, and which would not be found in a school that does not play athletic contests with winning in mind.

If it were possible to achieve a situation where all contests were played between a group of schools whose only objectives were exercise, fun and sportsmanship, with no obvious score keeping, then athletic competition between schools would maintain maximum benefits.

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## APPENDIX

LETTER SENT TO PRINCIPALS OF SCHOOLS IN POCAHONTAS COUNTY TO  
OBTAIN LISTS OF NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF PARENTS OF THE  
STUDENTS INVOLVED IN JUNIOR HIGH ATHLETICS

October 11, 1971

Dear Sir:

As a partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Science degree in Education at Drake University, I am making a study of parental opinions concerning interscholastic athletics in the junior high school.

To do so, I must obtain lists of those parents involved.

I would appreciate it if you would compile listings of the names and addresses of all parents of junior high students who will be involved in interscholastic athletics at your school this year. Please make separate listings for boys' and girls' parents, and also indicate whether the student is currently participating or probably will participate this year.

I have enclosed a stamped, self-addressed envelope for return of this information to me, by October 20th, please.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Finnegan

Rolfe, Iowa 50581

P.S. I have also enclosed a copy of the opinionnaire which I intend to send to the parents as a part of this project.

LETTER ACCOMPANYING OPINIONNAIRE SENT TO PARENTS OF STUDENTS  
INVOLVED IN JUNIOR HIGH ATHLETICS IN POCAHONTAS COUNTY

October 27, 1971

Dear Parents:

As a part of the requirements for obtaining a Master of Science degree in Education, I am making a study of parental opinion concerning junior high school involvement in interscholastic athletics in Pocahontas County.

To aid in this study, I am sending an opinion form to parents of junior high students in this county.

I would appreciate it very much if you would take a few minutes to fill out this form and return it to me in the enclosed envelope.

The opinions wanted are your own honest ideas. Feel free to express them, as you are requested not to sign the form. Any further comments are also welcome.

I will need your completed form by next Wednesday, November 3rd.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Finnegan

Rolfe, Iowa 50581

OPINIONNAIRE SENT TO A RANDOM SELECTION OF PARENTS OF STUDENTS  
INVOLVED IN JUNIOR HIGH INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS IN  
POCAHONTAS COUNTY

This is an opinionnaire. Please mark the answer following each question which, in your opinion, is most correct. Please do not put your name on the paper. (Use a check mark (✓) in the chosen blank to indicate your answer.

1. Participation in junior high athletics has had the following results in the academic achievement of my child:

1. _____	2. _____	3. _____	4. _____	5. _____
great	some	no change	some	much
lowering	lowering	in grades	improvement	improvement
of grades	of grades		in grades	in grades

2. Involvement in junior high athletics has had the following effect on the time my child spends in studying:

1. _____	2. _____	3. _____	4. _____	5. _____
decreased	decreased	no change	increased	increased
greatly	somewhat		somewhat	greatly
(26-50%)	(5-25%)		(5-25%)	(26-50%)

3. I feel athletic competition between schools at junior high school age is:

1. _____	2. _____	3. _____	4. _____	5. _____
very	detrimental	neither	beneficial	very
detrimental		detrimental		Beneficial
		nor		
		beneficial		

4. My child's personality since participation in junior high athletics has apparently become:

1. _____	2. _____	3. _____	4. _____	5. _____
much	less	unchanged	more	much
less	outgoing		outgoing	more
outgoing				outgoing



5. All of the students involved in junior high athletics should be allowed to actively participate in them:

1. _____	2. _____	3. _____	4. _____	5. _____
strongly	somewhat	uncertain	somewhat	strongly
disagree	disagree		agree	agree

6. Competition to "make the team" is psychologically:

1. _____	2. _____	3. _____	4. _____	5. _____
very	detrimental	uncertain	beneficial	very
detrimental	to the		to the	beneficial
to the	child		child	to the
child				child

7. Too much emphasis is put on winning in junior high athletics.

1. _____	2. _____	3. _____	4. _____	5. _____
strongly	somewhat	uncertain	somewhat	strongly
disagree	disagree		agree	agree

8. My own opinion toward my child's participation in junior high athletics is:

1. _____	2. _____	3. _____	4. _____	5. _____
I strongly	I somewhat	I am	I somewhat	I strongly
disagree	disagree	uncertain	favor his	favor his
with his	with his	whether he	participa-	participa-
participa-	participa-	should	tion	tion
tion	tion	participate		

9. My child has been given a fair chance to participate according to his abilities in junior high athletics.

1. _____	2. _____	3. _____	4. _____	5. _____
strongly	somewhat	uncertain	somewhat	strongly
disagree	disagree		agree	agree

10. Healthwise, participation in junior high athletics seem to be:

1. _____	2. _____	3. _____	4. _____	5. _____
very	detrimental	uncertain	beneficial	very
detrimental				beneficial

11. As opposed to boys, a girl participating in junior high athletics is:

1. _____	2. _____	3. _____	4. _____	5. _____
definitely	perhaps	uncertain	probably	definitely
not as	not as		as	as
desirable	desirable		desirable	desirable

12. Before a game in which my child will play, his mental state is:

1. _____	2. _____	3. _____	4. _____	5. _____
totally	slightly	somewhat	quite	greatly
calm	excited	excited	excited	excited

13. I feel that the chance of injury in junior high athletics is:

1. _____	2. _____	3. _____	4. _____	5. _____
great	considerable	some	little	very
chance	chance	chance	chance	little
				chance

14. On the whole, participation in junior high athletics for my child has been:

1. _____	2. _____	3. _____	4. _____	5. _____
very	somewhat	neither	somewhat	very
harmful	harmful	harmful	beneficial	beneficial
		nor		
		beneficial		

15. As a prelude to high school athletics, participation in junior high interscholastic athletics is:

1. _____	2. _____	3. _____	4. _____	5. _____
definitely	probably	uncertain	probably	definitely
not	not		necessary	necessary
necessary	necessary			